



Faculty Senate

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

February 18, 2016

Dear Provost Gingerich, Vice-Chancellor Spindle & Chancellor Case,

The Faculty Senate wishes to convey to you our deep concern about the Strategic Pathways concepts, decisions, and process implemented by President Johnsen. We understand you represent UAA on the Summit Team and we hope that, alongside the leadership of our sister institutions UAF and UAS, you can help prevent damage to the credibility of President Johnsen and, more importantly, prevent damage to the academic mission of our family of universities.

President Johnsen has a responsibility to focus on the academic mission of the universities within the system he leads, but the Strategic Pathways document gives the unfortunate impression that his plan to deal with budget cuts starts and ends with the academic mission. Clearly, this is neither true nor strategic. An analogous document addressing administrative functions 'streamlining' would give a fuller picture of how the entire University of Alaska system will be impacted by anticipated budget reductions.

President Johnsen should state publicly that academic programs will be eliminated only as a last resort in meeting the budget constraints. Given the magnitude of the state's budget shortfall, everyone understands that academic programs will be affected, but at the moment, there is no public plan for restructuring UA administrative functions. Should it become financially impossible for the UA system to maintain all its current academic programs, the criteria and actual program data informing decisions around reductions should be publicly accessible.

As we move to a more tuition-dependent model of funding, all three institutions need to recruit and retain as many students as they can feasibly serve in a high-quality fashion. Any reduction to academic offerings has two main risks: fewer tuition-paying students and damage to the esteem of the institution. The latter will likely reduce future enrollments in other programs. We cannot afford changes to any academic program that will reduce tuition immediately or significantly in the future.

The "lead campus" model as currently presented does not demonstrate significant savings, but has great potential to damage the public's respect for all three institutions. If there is a target for cost cutting via Strategic Pathways or even projected potential cost savings, that information is needed now. On the other hand, if the concept is to have institutions with distinct "brands" and areas of excellence, so that potential students can easily identify their personal university of first choice, then this has potential to increase student recruitment and help each institution's bottom line.

We hope that your leadership and contributions to the Summit Team will help shape the Strategic Pathways conversations in productive ways for all University of Alaska students, now and in the future.

Best Regards,

Tara Smith

UAA Faculty Senate President

with the unanimous support of the Executive Board, acting on behalf of the UAA Faculty Senate, in accordance with the UAA Faculty Senate Constitution, Article 4, Section 13